

AMERICAN EMBASSY'S NATIONAL DAILY PRESS REVIEW

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Today's Top Stories

1. Pro-government and opposition papers divided over President Ouattara's New Year's Eve address
2. Confusion over the release of Gbagbo supporters
3. Ivorian press tycoon dies in plane crash

1. Pro-government and opposition papers divided over President Ouattara's New Year Address

Most dailies continued to report on the celebration of the New Year and President Ouattara's New Year's Eve message. An article in *Fraternite Matin* (p. 4) noted that the Ivorian leader called on Ivorians to join hands to work and rebuild the country's prestige. According to the daily, in a wide-ranging and optimistic address, President Ouattara recommitted the government to working for a timely recovery of the country's war-torn economy and to strengthening efforts to return to normal nationwide. "We are on the right track and we remain upbeat as good prospects are in the offing," he reportedly said.

Dailies close to the ruling RHDP coalition echoed this perspective whereas opposition papers qualified the address as a masquerade. *Le Temps* (p. 6) argued that, in his address, the Ivorian leader has purposely overlooked reality, highlighted by the pressing challenges of security and the lack of law and order. The paper went on tagging the positive prospects as "puff dreams."

Notre Voie (pp. 1 & 4) on its part carried a banner headline with a front page picture of a triumphant Laurent Gbagbo, whom the paper referred to as the "genuine leader." In an article contrasting the two Gbagbo and Ouattara, the paper alleged that former president Laurent Gbagbo's leadership was by far more effective than President Ouattara's approach. The paper criticized the gap between President Ouattara's rhetoric of good governance and the facts and denounced a double-standard of justice prevailing in the country since Gbagbo's April 11 arrest.

2. Confusion over the release of Gbagbo supporters

The decision last week by an Abidjan court to grant bail to some partisans of former President Laurent Gbagbo has triggered comments in the press after confusion was reported on their case. *Fraternite Matin* (p. 5) underscored that Mr. Franck Anderson Kouassi, the former head of the Conseil National de la Communication Audiovisuelle, Cote d'Ivoire's former broadcast media regulatory agency, was not released Friday as expected. According to the daily, unlike Mr. Herman Aboa who was discharged last Friday, administrative procedures have delayed the release of the man arrested for allegedly

attempting to undermine state security and for mismanagement. His release is scheduled for today, according to his lawyer Mr. Dirabou Mathurin, the paper added.

Le Nouveau Courrier (p. 5) denounced ambivalence in the court decision suggesting that its decisions are ordered by the government. The daily alleged that the whole judicial system is under the command of the ruling regime and serves as a means to blackmail the opposition.

This development came as Gbagbo's FPI said a lasting peace is contingent upon the release of all of the partisans of the former leader imprisoned in the wake of Gbagbo's April 11 arrest. In an address made on the eve of the new year, FPI spokesperson Laurent Akoun called on Ivorian authorities to take measures to restore the rule of law and to stop harassing FPI partisans. Le Temps (p. 5) published the verbatim transcript of the address.

3. Ivorian press tycoon dies in plane crash

Mr. Nady Rayess, chief of Cote d'Ivoire's media group known as Groupe Olympe, died yesterday as his private airplane crashed in a village 37 miles from Abidjan. The information made news in the press which unanimously paid tribute to the deceased. Providing details on the accident, Soir Info (pp. 2 - 4) noted that Mr. Rayess' single-engine aircraft crashed as he was returning from the seaside town of Assinie yesterday morning.

According to Fraternite Matin (p. 11), Mr. Souleimane Coty Diakite, the Ivorian Minister of Communication has, on behalf of the government, saluted the deceased, whom Mr. Coty hailed as "a valiant entrepreneur and media man." Mr. Rayess's Groupe Olympe is the owner of Soir Info, L'Inter and Star Magazine.

Note: Opposition newspaper Aujourd'hui was not published today; it has been suspended by the Conseil National de la Presse, Cote d'Ivoire's print media regulator.